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the hart house music magazine

demo

APPLE MUSIC
A CURATORIAL FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

CLIMBING THE CHARTS AS A NON-ENGLISH MUSICIAN

VOICES BREAKING THROUGH
CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS MUSICIANS MAKING WAVES

CEREBRAL ARTS
INVITES US TO LISTEN AND LEARN

JORDAAN MASON
ON VISIBILITY AND SAFE SPACES

Photo by Jennifer Hyc.

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Demo: The Hart House Music Magazine

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LETTER FROM THE SENIOR EDITOR MARKO CINDRIC

Over the course of my time at Demo, I'm consistently astounded by just how passionate our contributors are about music — each year, with each new batch of contributors, I've been introduced to entirely new artists that I may never have encountered otherwise thanks to the unique tastes everyone brings to the table. Perhaps one of the most valuable things about the Demo community is our willingness to share our discoveries and experiences with one another, and with you, the reader.

In my final year as editor, I have much to be thankful for: Demo's been my home away from home throughout my university career, and it's a community whose love and support extends far beyond its meetings — I've remained very close friends with former editors and contributors, and it's always exciting to hear that many of them remain heavily involved in the Toronto music scene to this day. It's a vast network that serves as the perfect anchor for Toronto's characteristic hustle and bustle — there's nothing quite like rolling into a show with a group of your fellow Demoers to help make the scene less overwhelming.

I'm also incredibly pleased to feature Jordaan Mason on our cover this year. I first met Jordaan through our mutual gig as front-of-house employees at the Music Gallery, but in fact, I'd been listening to their music for much longer, having first discovered *Divorce Lawyers I Shaved My Head* back in high school. As someone who grew up in a small, culturally-barren town in southern Ontario, I was astonished to discover that such beautiful music was being made just over the horizon, and tracks like "Racehorse: Get Married!" left a lasting impact on my musical trajectory. Jordaan is a true gem of Toronto, and I'm very grateful that they were willing to share their personal experiences as a genderqueer artist in this year's cover story.

To my co-editors Stuart Oakes and James Li, a simple thank you is not nearly enough to encapsulate the tireless effort you've both poured into this publication — Demo wouldn't be nearly the same without your hard work and unwavering support, and it's been an absolute pleasure working with both of you. James, I wish you all the best wherever life after U of T takes you, and Stuart, I can rest comfortably knowing that I'll be passing the torch to your capable hands next year. I can't wait to see what the future will bring.

I'd also extend my thanks to Demo's staff advisor Zoë Dille, for her infinitely valuable guidance in breathing Demo to life each year and for serving as the glue that holds the Hart House Music Committee together.

Last but certainly not least, I'd like to thank Demo's incredible team of contributors — both in print and online, none of this would exist without you, and your talent and passion never fails to shine through in your writing and photography. Thank you all for being such a wonderful team to work with!

As I wrote in my editor's letter last year, Demo has always been so much more than just a magazine: it's a community, a support system, and a home you can always turn to when the city gets too cold. We hope you enjoy the ride.

— Marko Cindric

LETTER FROM THE JUNIOR EDITOR STUART OAKES

Demo is in a unique position — thanks to Hart House's support, our publication avoids requiring a fiscal 'bottom line.' In essence, there is no ulterior motive driving the magazine: we want to get things right and we want to keep growing our ranks, of course, but we do not have to worry about the magazine's legacy: no matter what (to a degree), Demo will live on beyond my time at this university. That is important because it allows for both freedom of expression, but moreover, it allows the magazine to function as a support system and a community rather than simply as a generator of hype and buzz. The more I have seen of Toronto (and Canada), the more I have come to realize how much is happening on the ground, and whatever we can do to support those people and get their voices heard is a worthy goal for my time as editor. Having gotten that out of the way, I would like to extend thanks to my two fellow editors, Marko Cindric and James Li, for being the best fellow editors probably ever. I have learned most of what I know from working with these two, and they have continued to astonish me with their knowledge, their connections, and their ability to crunch deadlines. I also want to thank the contributors: for putting up with me, for their commitment, and for the fantastic work that they have submitted. Enjoy!

LETTER FROM THE MANAGING ONLINE EDITOR JAMES LI

This is my last year as Demo's managing online editor and it's been nothing but a pleasure. Demo hasn't just a publication to me, it's also a community — it gave me the opportunity to meet writers, readers, and artists who all share my passion for music. In my time with Demo, I've been amazed by how music sets us apart — with all of the niche artists and scenes in Toronto and beyond — and how it brings us together — whether we have a Carly Rae Jepsen hook stuck in our heads, feel Kendrick Lamar's rage at injustice in America, or mourn the loss of a legend like David Bowie. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to work with a very talented team of student writers, whether they're covering the festival circuit, interviewing up-and-coming local musicians, or even just gushing about what a song means to them. I've also had the privilege of working with my excellent co-editors Marko Cindric and Stuart Oakes, who work tirelessly behind the scenes. And I'd like to thank Demo's readership — if our website traffic stats are anything to go on, there's some of you out as far as Denmark and Japan — for making this all possible!

SPECIAL THANKS

Jordaan Mason

Cerebral Arts

Rizzla

Emily Scherzinger

Elena Gritzan

The Hart House Music Committee

Zoë Dille

John Monahan

Emma Arppe-Robertson

LETTER FROM THE HART HOUSE STAFF ADVISOR ZOË DILLE

Welcome back and happy 2016! With the weather feeling more like fall it's hard to believe that we are actually in the winter semester. Last semester we welcomed a new warden, John Monahan, to Hart House, and we are excited to be working with him. Given current events, we are engaging programmatically on several fronts with the crisis in Syria and the migration of Syrian refugees to Canada. Hart House is encouraging students to tap into their humanity, become informed, engage in dialogue and raise awareness — as U2 frontman Bono famously said, "The world needs more Canada!"

The Music Committee has launched another exciting year, restructuring its programming with a focus on creating opportunities for experiential learning, student engagement, mentorship and partnership development. To that end, we are pleased to have hosted the second annual music industry panel discussion, as well as introducing a new pilot program that offers one Music Committee student the opportunity to job shadow and be mentored by the Music Committee's very own sound technician, Michel Plourde. Michel, or 'Spock' as he is known in the business, has been mixing sound for Arbor Room gigs for over ten years and brings a wealth of knowledge to the table. You can often find him sitting in on an Open Mic jam session with his flute, reviewing classwork from his teaching gig at Trebas, or otherwise doodling in his sound diary. The Committee thanks Michel for all he has brought to the House; musicians love playing here and much of that is due to their experiences with him.

And finally, I wish to personally thank Freda Zhang, the Music Committee's secretary for the past four years and a tireless champion of all things Hart House! Freda has evolved from her role in the Music Committee to be an important voice on several Hart House-led special project committees, as well as being a member of both the Hart House Symphonic Band and the Hart House Orchestra in her spare time! Thank you Freda; we're sad to see you go but we know you'll go on to rock the world!

As always, we invite you to explore Hart House musically and otherwise, peek into a rehearsal by one of our instrumental or vocal groups, cheer on your peers at U of T Idol, step up to the plate at Open Mic, or make it a date night with friends at Friday's Jazz at Oscar's. At Hart House, there is always something to engage your mind, soothe your soul, and feed your spirit. "Where words fail, music speaks." (Hans Christian Andersen)

LETTER FROM THE HART HOUSE WARDEN JOHN MONAHAN

Welcome to the spring 2016 issue of Demo Magazine. In the half a year that I have been Warden of Hart House, I have already had the privilege of meeting and working with countless dedicated and engaged students from all across the University who have made Hart House their home. I would like to extend a special thanks to the team who put together this most recent issue of Demo, and to the rest of the Music Committee who do such important work to ensure that Hart House pulsates with as wide a variety of musical sounds and rhythms as there are members of the House.

During my next five years as Warden, I hope to support and build on the creative contributions that Hart House makes to the lives of people all across the University of Toronto and beyond. One of the key strategic focuses of the House will be to become an even more inclusive place: a space where diverse people learn to navigate all manner of differences respectfully, and begin to discover and embrace communities and cultures beyond their own. Inclusivity is a whole set of practices that are absolutely essential to the world beyond university, and those of us at Hart House would be failing in our job to serve and support students unless we modelled those practices with energy and intention.

Hart House is also a place to develop more connected citizens, more giving citizens, and more engaged citizens. We need to build bridges and be in conversation with the city, the province, and the world around us, whether through music and journalism like those involved with Demo, or through such other areas as inter-community dialogue, social justice, athletics, recreation, or the visual and literary arts. Whatever your interest, or whatever music provides the soundtrack to your life, always remember that this is *your* House. I encourage you to take full advantage of all it has to offer.

P.16

Jordaan Mason. Photo by Jamil Fiorino-Habib.

RIZZLA RISING

SOFIA LUU

I discovered Brian Friedberg's Twitter before I started delving into his body of work as Rizzla. In fact, it was while I was writing my article for Demo's 2015 issue, where I explored the messy implications of cultural appropriation in an increasingly globalized and often blurry music landscape, that my friend pointed me towards Rizzla's Twitter account. As Rizzla, Friedberg makes music worthy of discussion and confrontation. With track titles like "Fucking Fascist" and "Black Jacobins" on his latest EP, *Iron Cages*, one can't help but try to pinpoint Rizzla's intentions and inspirations. Now I've become just as familiar with Rizzla's music as I am his tweets. I think this is especially important to make note of because we often perceive electronic musicians as quiet, mysterious individuals unlike other musical artists. At the same time, some producers think it's acceptable to say bigoted things because they perceive a clear divide between the music and the politics. But electronic music is neither a passive or quiet genre, and by associating this kind of music with those kinds of ideas, we erase the genre's roots in racialized and marginalized communities.

Rizzla. Media photo via Facebook.

When we first got in touch, you mentioned you were in the middle of finals. What are you studying?

I'm lucky to be studying music in a few forms: theory, history, cognition, and technology. I'm writing on the technical process and cultural implications of loudness normalization currently, and trying to bring my own experiences as a DJ and previous cultural theory into play as much as possible while learning more advanced signal processing. I look up to scholars like Wayne Marshall, Jace Clayton and Larisa Mann as inspirations for both academic rigour and performance experience in this course of study.

Can you tell me a little bit more about your academic background and how it informs the music you make as Rizzla?

I'm happiest when I'm researching — [that's] really how I got into DJing formally, investing large amounts of time following recommendations from party experiences, knowledgeable friends, YouTube rabbit holes, and Google Translate chains to follow very specific emotional and timbral content through pop and dance music from around the world. The music and bootlegs I produce are congealed impressions of things I've heard along the way, and hope to hear again. A lot of my tracks are for stitching together otherwise hard to blend material from producers I'll never meet or even speak to online. The ethics of representing what you find are challenging, ranging from album art with egregious, neocolonialist, violent imagery, to the more thoughtful mistakes of translation that a lot of American producers, myself included, have made when "encountering." That is a purposely loaded word choice.

In the Noisey feature where you listed your top ten "most fire" dancehall riddims, you included a disclaimer: "Anything can be lost in translation." Immediately, it brought to mind artists who like to employ controversial imagery and themes in their work for the purpose of 'art.' But within the context of sharing the dancehall riddims, what did you mean by that disclaimer?

Establishing an outsider position of knowledge, but not expertise or ownership, is and should be a challenge; if it's easy it's wrong. Translation requires conversation, which is, at its best, honest. Loss of context is inevitable in this retelling. Regarding dancehall, there is a history of homophobia and queerness within dancehall culture, explored by many filmmakers and writers, very recently at [the University of the West Indies] in a conference called Beyond Homophobia. At one point researcher Carla Moore gave a content / trigger warning before playing "Boom Bye Bye" during her presentation; that sums up my opinion on the matter without need for further comment. I suppose "shock" imagery is the regionally legal right of anyone who decides to use it, but there is an amplification of critique online now that exposes how fascism and white fragility are codependent, and capable of manifesting in any such anglocentric communities or subscenes that imagine and illustrate their own oppression for recreation.

Tell me a little bit more about the #KUNQ artist collective. How did the collective get started? What are your goals, if you have any?

I think my goals for #KUNQ are irrelevant; we each are on our own trajectory and by design have no centralized leadership, or really any formal decision-making, to avoid reproducing any form of hierarchy. As a result we're not building a label or anything formal like that. #KUNQ is a conversation we have that sometimes gets loud enough for other people to hear. We're continually exploring our own work, collaborating, and developing a more formal platform for our visual art and writing. There are rumblings of a group project of original material, but not until we survive the winter.

You one said in an interview that it's "really exciting having the URL meet the IRL." A lot of electronic artists have been quite vocal on Twitter in ways that haven't been the most productive or constructive. What purpose does Twitter serve to you?

I think someone's Twitter content says a lot about what their values are, and more obviously what their interests are. It can be like shouting into the dark and hearing reassuring voices, or having red eyes staring back at you. I tweet when I feel the spirit, but I tend to read my timeline more than I speak into it on a daily basis. The level, complexity, and grace of critical discourse and community that is not centred around reproducing white patriarchy is humbling to learn from, and is producing and inspiring alternative media that rivals studio-system entertainment. When I get mad, it's directed more at structures and systems than individuals, and I feel we all have personal challenges that make us more sensitive to certain things than others. Music is at the heart of all the things I care about ultimately, and it's been the best place to keep track of people who really know what they are talking about.

Shagabond. Media photo via Facebook.

STUDENT MUSICIAN PROFILE

SHAGABOND

INTERVIEWED BY DAVEN BOPARAI AND WILLIAM GOLDIE

Nicholas Arvanitis, increasingly better known as Shagabond, is at an inflection point. At 19, his textural, strikingly individualistic R&B productions have already garnered him a release with prominent UK duo Bondax and a steady string of gigs throughout Toronto and Montreal. Demo sits down with the Toronto producer and first-year U of T student as he readies his debut EP, due later this year.

Who's pushing you forward right now?
I'm trying not to be influenced sonically, but there's definitely influence on work ethic. There's a lot of guys on SoundCloud that I have mad respect for in terms of the amount of music they put out. I don't understand how they put out so many projects out so quickly. In terms of sound, I'm really just trying to do my own thing and keep the same vision in mind.

You're currently hard at work on an EP. Kind of a big transition from SoundCloud to the world of published music. How's it coming out?
I wouldn't say that there's really a plan for release quite yet, but I do know it'll be available on multiple platforms. Nothing is complete yet so we haven't reached out to anyone for promotion.

As of a U of T student, do you have trouble switching from your classes to something you love to do in a creative space, or is music a way for you to escape?
It can be both at times; music is a love-hate relationship. Sometimes you can't wrap your head around it, and other days it just flows. With school, it takes consistency, whereas music is inconsistent. It's like I have two feet in totally different spaces. Balancing the two is definitely difficult.

Do you want this EP to reflect every musical facet of you at this point, or are you hoping for something that's more of a vision — things that are connected or building upon one another?
Right now with the EP, I want to do something kind of in between those two ideas. I don't want it to be a straight-up story album even though I love that concept. I want to still have quality pieces that you can listen to on their own just because it's an EP, and at the same time I feel like in this digital age of music no one is really listening to full albums.

Top three places to get grub in Toronto?
[First] probably Lee's. I really enjoy Burger's Priest — it's really divine. Also the Vietnamese restaurant, Anh Dao.

DEMO'S FAVOURITE ALBUMS 2015

KENDRICK LAMAR
TO PIMP A BUTTERFLY
(TOP DAWG)

The reviews this year were nearly unanimous: *To Pimp A Butterfly* is one the best albums of the decade. Lamar's third LP was almost instantaneously my album of the year, having both lived up to the hype and, in my opinion, exceeded it. A massive, undeniable artistic statement with a large, progressive social impact, *TPAB* has, as an inspiring and provoking work in a time of turbulence and seemingly hopeless strife, shaken me to my core. Whatever we originally wanted, this is certainly the Kendrick album we needed.

Ayla Shiblaq

GARY CLARK JR.
THE STORY OF SONNY BOY SLIM
(WARNER BROS.)

Gary Clark Jr. is arguably our generation's most celebrated blue's musician, yet to limit the Texan to a single genre is practically sacrilege. Reminiscent of Marvin Gaye, Lenny Kravitz, and Buddy Guy, Clark plays with an acid-washed funk that draws from rock, R&B, soul, and gospel. As a result, the album proves to be an eclectic journey through blues jams and soulfully psychedelic synth tracks. Best of all? His warm riffs. Watch for the funk clatter of "Can't Sleep," the thick blues of "Grinder," and the unforgettable groove of "The Healing." The album's purpose is immediately apparent: "This music is our healing."

Emily Powers

FLORENCE + THE MACHINE
HOW BIG, HOW BLUE, HOW BEAUTIFUL
(ISLAND)

2015 saw Florence + The Machine deliver a masterpiece. *How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful* is nothing short of stunning, and easily their most contemporary-sounding release to date. Whimsical harp and a "fairytale," "forest"-like ambiance have been replaced with acoustic guitar, piano, and brass, and the change works – it helps that the tracks feature the same powerhouse vocals and poetic lyrics that originally made her such a killer artist. *How Big* sees Florence's sound continuing to evolve, and the result is one of the year's best releases.

Savana James

LIANNE LA HAVAS
BLOOD
(NONESUCH)

Perhaps surprisingly, given the elegantly dark vibe, themes of self-love dominate Lianne La Havas' sophomore album *Blood*. A carefree lyrical fluidity reflects her Greek and Jamaican upbringing and her ability to effortlessly weave together the traditional and the modern. Lianne's psychedelic voice heightens your senses as it transitions between fragile and soft on "Wonderful," and soul-moving and deep on "Green and Gold." "What You Don't Do" is the gem, showcasing her smooth treble tones and courageous attitude. *Blood* is a coming-of-age story, following the footsteps of a girl who has gracefully grown into one of pop soul's greatest treasures.

Jessica Turner

BENJAMIN CLEMENTINE
AT LEAST FOR NOW
(BARCLAY)

At Least For Now's instrumentation feels as decadently exhaustive as the range of human emotions it explores. Following in the footsteps of artists like Antony Hegarty and Nina Simone, Benjamin Clementine has crafted an inimitable reclamation of the world of high art that implants vulnerable black masculinity into a lineage of canonical classical musicians and 19th century French poets. However, despite the sweeping organ and grandiose horns, the album's strength rests in Clementine's expert piano accompaniment, raw and untaught, which commands immediate attention. Clementine usually appears on stage draped in very little; similarly, his debut displays the confidence of an artist who has flourished through adversity.

Melissa Vincent

TENEMENT
PREDATORY HEADLIGHTS
(DON GIOVANNI)

Tenement cut a swath through the North American punk scene, mixing punchy and direct songwriting with the kind of unapologetic melodic sensibility that has people affixing "pop" to their genre descriptors. However, the band's hardcore roots reveal themselves in their blistering, blink-and-it's-over live sets. *Predatory Headlights*' 25 satisfying rock and roll tracks not only recreate those sets but in some ways surpass them, shattering expectations for a punk double-LP. This is their most ambitious and realized work, showcasing an astounding breadth of stylistic creativity and song-craft. One of the year's most rewarding listens, it will come to dominate your musical life in the best way possible.

Cole Firth

COURTNEY BARNETT
SOMETIMES I SIT AND THINK, AND SOMETIMES I JUST SIT
(MOM + POP)

Courtney Barnett's first album offers an intimate glance at the world through the eyes of the Melbourne native. Each track is an endearing anecdote about everyday occurrences, swaddled in nostalgic, distorted guitar and carefully delivered in an "unconcerned" sing-speak. On turbulent lead single, "Pedestrian at Best," Barnett struggles with accepting her success and doubts its permanence. "Depreston" learns about love and loss at a suburban open-house event. Both exemplify the hyperaware empathy that sits at the heart of *Sometimes*: Barnett sees things through a rose-tinted magnifying glass, zooming in on the positives in our surreal, mundane world.

Alekzia Hosein

DEATH GRIPS
JENNY DEATH
(NONESUCH)

North America's favourite meta-musical troublemakers manage to shape-shift yet again without losing the digitally corrupted street energy that caused all the initial hype. From the opening crackle of "I Break Mirrors with My Face in the United States" and continuing through the dystopian club anthem "Inanimate Sensation," the no-BS distortion attack "Turned Off," the future-Swans bass blasts of "The Powers That B," and the unexpected kiss of rock and roll on closer "On GP," *Jenny Death* is a noided ride through hard drive hell, armed with only a barely-functioning iPhone and a bag of unknown [Editor's Note: placebo!] pills from the Deep Web.

Adam Piotrowicz

"Sunset with Light Projectors..." by TORLEY via Flickr Creative Commons.

Matt Nguyen, Alex DiFlorio, and Mike Zbikowski. Photo by Rachel Evangeline Chiong.

CEREBRAL ARTS

A PROFILE BY RACHEL EVANGELINE CHIONG

Cerebral Arts is as organic as they come. Created by the intertwined aspirations of thinkers and innovators, Matt Nguyen, Alex DiFlorio, and Mike Zbikowski are the masterminds behind this invention. In the disparity of a generation plagued with the jaded disease (one that turns eager-eyed youths into somber adults), they've created their own solution. A Cerebral Arts show is difficult to describe: it's an amalgam boasting hidden-gem musicians and artists, but also quite literally a learning experience. Every show has a theme dealing with a certain social issue, from May's "For the Love of Madness," which focused on de-stigmatizing mental illnesses, to "You(th) Vote," hosted days before the recent federal election. Their shows relentlessly engage the senses, rousing the slumbering minds of those struggling with self-confidence and encouraging individuals to be more empathetic to the world and kinder to their own hearts.

SWEET TO THE EARS AND EYES

Music and arts are the central arteries of Cerebral Arts. Local talent livens up cozy venues; previous shows have featured artists like Mayraki, whose fierce hip-hop fusion lit the Central's floor on fire. Throughout the events, visual artists such as Kass Szmidt — with her playful and surreal illustrations — brighten up the corners, creating a vibrant space everywhere you look. Matt, Alex, and Mike wanted to create a place where artists didn't have to sell their souls and give up income just to share their art. They've made it a goal to segue from the self-deprecating cycle of artists and musicians receiving dismal pay for their efforts. Now taking shape is a place where behind-the-scenes fiascoes — from taping posters in the sweltering afternoon heat to playing real-life Tetris in order to transport equipment — finally pay off. Thus, weeks before every event, stewing in a smog of caffeine, the Cerebral Arts crew begins brainstorming. Like a well-oiled machine, the three check into their roles: Mike handles the venues, Matt the bands, and Alex the artists. The three are constantly on their mission to elevate the platform of music and art since, as Matt explained, it can reach a large audience that many other outlets can't.

FOOD FOR THE BRAIN

"If you're going to be out anyway," Alex pointed out, "why not come out… and learn a little bit." In the slew of urban Toronto, where social issues are as common as TTC delays, young people find themselves in the ironic demographic of the affected yet helpless. Unfortunately, according to Mike, the problem is always the same: money. It's a slap in the face to those with empty pockets, which is why Cerebral Arts tackled the issue into a headlock and knocked out their own solution. "How do you take a show and make it more than a donation?" was the main question that Mike and the rest of the crew had to take into consideration every gig. During "You(th) Vote," Alex came up with the idea to hold a mock election and get the audience more comfortable with voting. From zines to spoken word, Cerebral Arts pilots channels where artists, gifted with different talents, can voice their opinion and educate each other on social issues.

GOOD FOR THE HEART

It's about taking your music and art and not making it selfish, Matt and Mike explained. It's about sharing it. Looking forward,

Mayraki. Photo by Carey Costa.

there are more challenges that Cerebral Arts anticipates, such as finding ways to accommodate younger audiences, especially those who face the misfortune of wanting to go to a 19+ gig while underage. Teenagers need to know that they don't have to wait until they're "adults" to make a difference. No matter how young a person is, they can learn that they don't have to depend on an impersonal entity whose only face comes in the form of a generic coloured logo. While these dreams are still far into the future, Cerebral Arts refuses to slow down. The organization has always been a group effort, Matt remarks. Over time they "created friendships with like-minded people in an organization that required strength in numbers." And there is something special about that, something that can't be reproduced by big-name labels no matter how much money they throw at it. Cerebral wants "to create a community that's well educated, well respected," Alex describes, where musicians and artists could find their voices and the people who would listen to them. Despite the struggles that come with breaking into the gruelling music scene by night and living as students by day, the organizers of Cerebral Arts remain determined. While every show may end in a cycle of self-criticism, their hard work is greatly appreciated by bands, artists, and supporters, and will only continue to be — because their mission goes beyond hosting a great Friday night. They aim to teach people to care about each other in the sincerest ways possible, and out of all the people that Cerebral Arts could have been, the world is thankful that it is Matt, Mike, and Alex.

Rachel Mesic. Photo by Carey Costa.

In Reminiscence of Another Time

KALINA NEDELCHEVA — 222 West 23rd Street, Manhattan, New York City. Pass it, and you may just feel inspired.

The reason for such a phenomenon is the Hotel Chelsea, built between 1883 and 1885 and historically known as a home and meeting point of artists, writers, and musicians of the Thomas Wolfe, Larry Rivers, and Tom Waits caliber. A vigorous cultural history is held within the Victorian Gothic walls of the hotel, an established site for philosophical and creative exchanges. While the artists of our time take in the ornate iron balconies and the Queen Anne Revival elements of the facade, surely an internal part of them desires to relive its past: to reside in the pale blue room with the white metal bed where Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe had lived, splitting the tiny space for only $55 a month thanks to then hotel manager Stanley Bard; to argue about the essence of life in Sandy Daley's entirely white room; or just to embrace artistic life with the barest of necessities (including a worn-out guitar and a black composition book). The Chelsea was a poetic paradise, offering a way of life that allowed for freedom of expression and an expedition of the self, yet all the while sheltering the individual from the capitalist lifestyle of the outside world. Behind the closed door of each room existed a small universe that engulfed the resident, along with everyone who crossed its threshold.

The "Hotel Chelsea dream," as I like to call it — when musicians share their deep and profound dreams of visiting New York City and staying in the room in which their heroes created — strikes me as an obvious attempt for young, upcoming artists to feel more connected with the people who may have best understood them. You could write a whole list about the rooms at the Chelsea as the birthplaces of many notable works, including Bob Dylan writing "Sara" and "Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands" in Room 211, and Leonard Cohen's "Chelsea Hotel #2" that commemorated the time Janis Joplin fellated him in Room 424. And, from Nancy Spungen's stabbing in Room 100 to Madonna's photo shoot in Room 822, the Chelsea is like a book of short stories, with each room containing a record of some type of climax. Even the hallways, which Patti Smith often explored trying to catch glimpses of Virgil Thompson's grand piano, bore witness to multiple creative apotheoses. On one occasion, the punk singer-songwriter's wanderings concluded with Salvador Dali stopping her in the lobby in order to tell her, "You're like a crow, a gothic crow," something she'd later refer to in her book *Just Kids* as, "just another day at the Chelsea."

What undoubtedly preserves the beauty of this building is that people came there to follow their dreams. It was an informal artist colony, where even the successful ones could only afford to live as extravagant bums — an open market, where artists traded paintings for rent, gathered in Janis' room to play while she drank a bottle of Southern Comfort (even in the afternoon), and passed time riding the elevator because merely stepping out of their rooms was an adventure. A beautifully-constructed exterior with a shabby elegance formed by the damned souls of its residents, the New York hotel is an emblem of artistry in its essential forms.

In the current environment of media and the centralization of celebrity life and money, it's easy to lose creative focus — the life of the artist has forever been altered by the digital commercialization of image, a new dimension of expression that forbids us from ever going back. The Chelsea serves as an eccentric anchor for the young artist; it communicates the nostalgia of the "starving artist" as a romanticized persona. A concrete reminder of art for art's sake. It's a paradox, because the members of this now glamourized community were among the poorest and most troubled back then. They offered unique beauty through their art, yet would likely be referred to as indolent bums nowadays. Interesting how we come to praise the inexistent, the unattainable, the gone, and somehow still hold little insight into our own futures.

The end of an era was marked with the restoration of the Chelsea. One can still visit it, as it became a landmark in 1966 (visitors cannot stay there, as hotel operations ceased in 2011 — for the first time in 106 years). So perhaps the thoughts that arise while passing 222 West 23rd Street should not only pertain to the experiences of the Chelsea's past residents: the hotel's destiny is in limbo, and only time will tell if it will be able to preserve the gritty charm of years of communal artistry or if its essence will vanish in the commotion of the business-infested world of the twenty-first century. Even with this acute possibility, there will always remain those who "remember you well … the Chelsea Hotel."

Hotel Chelsea. Photo by Andrew Malone via Flickr Creative Commons.

VOICES BREAKING THROUGH

JAMIL FIORINO-HABIB

"When you talk about people going through colonization and oppression, who have not had a voice – and that extends beyond here in Canada – the first place that voice comes from is from the arts."

Bear Witness, founder of A Tribe Called Red
Ottawa Sun (January 8th, 2016)

Aboriginal music has often been silenced within the Western music sphere. Traditional Indigenous songs and pieces have difficulty making their way into the public eye; often being overlooked in the marketplace because of their "nicheness." However, the inseparability of arts and politics means that, in spite of the uphill battle, Aboriginal musical activism (which in this case includes the relation of personal experience) has never actually disappeared.

Bear Witness, quoted above, is at the forefront of this ongoing activism, among many of his Indigenous counterparts. In the same interview, he discussed the importance of the intersection between the arts, politics, and representation: "As a young Indigenous person, when you grow up without those faces that look like your own who are out there doing things like creating music, it limits what you see yourself being able to accomplish … seeing **Buffy [Sainte-Marie]** on *Sesame Street* when we were kids, that was massive, because there wasn't another person on TV who looked like us, who talked about the things our parents talked about." The broader issue at hand for the Indigenous is one that rests on the ability to vocalize the beliefs, experiences, and rich histories — as well as abuses — of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and for these sentiments to affect great (and necessary) social change.

In order to maneuver past these silencing powers, many contemporary Indigenous artists blend their cultural histories with modern genres and instrumentation so as to assimilate themselves into the larger musical sphere. Navigating the intersection between two worlds — the traditions of their people(s) and the newer, more broadly familiar sound of contemporary Western styles — they must find ways of reinventing both so as to stay true to their own artistic drive in a manner able to communicate that focus to a broader audience.

Some of these artists have been going at it for years, like alternative rock band **Digging Roots**, who combine gritty, sexy, soulful blues with reggae and folk inspiration in order to create a sound that feels truly impassioned. The group is husband and wife duo Raven Kanetakta and ShoShona Kish, who share vocals and writing duties. Behind their down-and-dirty vibe lies an array of thoughtful lyricism that conveys stories of desperation and resilience, and the tales of travellers, lovers, and freedom fighters. The group has won several awards over the course of their career, including "Aboriginal Album of the Year" at the Juno Awards for their second album, 2009's *We Are…* Their latest album, 2014's *For the Light*, carefully blends nature sounds, like buzzing insects and airy winds, into their high-octane style.

Another veteran is **Drezus**. Born Jeremiah Manitopyes, Drezus is a Plains Cree-Saulteaux hip-hop artist who has been praised for his highly political lyricism. Many of his most recent songs have been direct reactions to Bill C-45 (a bill that made it easier for outsider businesses to develop reserve lands in order to extract resources) and the Idle No More movement, as he responds to the exploitation of his people and their property. Jeremiah's story is one that many Indigenous individuals will recognize: a difficult upbringing, alcoholism, gang-banging, suicide attempts, and stints in

A Tribe Called Red. Photo by Falling Tree Photography.

jail. Ultimately, Drezus found solace and a new identity in music. He aims to put aside the petty street beef that sometimes characterizes Native rap in order to talk about the "pressing issues" — "… the struggle, the pain, the inspiration, the motivation, the growth, the fire [of a Native man] …" (taken from an interview with *Aboriginal Peoples Television Network*). Drezus recently took home "Indigenous Entertainer of the Year" and "Best Hip Hop CD" at the 2015 Indigenous Music Awards for his album *Indian Summer*, which includes his most well-known single, "Warpath."

A third example of this intersection is up-and-coming electronic musician **IsKwé**, of Cree / Dene and Irish descent, who compliments soulful, powerful vocals with heavy bass lines and spine-tingling synths. Drawing from inspirations as diverse as jazz and trip-hop as well as her Aboriginal roots, she has an expressive, colourful style and outspoken attitude towards the treatment of Indigenous peoples — her latest single, "Nobody Knows," throws the spotlight on the more than 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada — as well as a youthful vitality and charisma that many artists can only dream of accessing. IsKwé was nominated for "Electronic / Dance Recording of the Year" at the 2014 Western Canadian Music Awards and was featured on *CBC Music*'s "10 Canadian Musicians You Need to Know."

Many of the most prominent Aboriginal musicians in recent memory have achieved recognition thanks to to their gift for reinventing musical genres in their own image and for their own purposes. A trailblazer in this regard is the above-mentioned **Buffy Sainte-Marie**, who had a broad impact on social revolution in the 1960s thanks to a style that combined her roots with a more widely accessible folk sound. Even today, she continues to be an iconic figure in the music community. More recent examples include the previously-mentioned Juno Award-winning electronic dance group, **A Tribe Called Red**, who mix traditional powwow music with electronic beats, and Polaris Prize winner **Tanya Tagaq**, who has brought together traditional throat singing with contemporary instrumentation.

Exploring these rising artists and supporting their inspired musical talents provides unfamiliar audiences with an opportunity for education; insight into the lives of communities from which we would otherwise be bereft of, and into the rhythmic and tonal stylings of First Nations music. In an age where the music industry is characterized by a multitude of subgenres, each with their own devoted communities, the rising prevalence of Indigenous music and the revival of First Nations culture is not only inevitable, but crucial to any sociopolitical development. The intrinsic 'rallying' quality that music can have on its communities is one that should not be overlooked — after all, history has repeatedly shown us the political power of music.

Jordaan Mason

A Conversation on Visibility and Safe Spaces

— Stuart Oakes —

Jordaan Mason. Photo by Jamil Fiorino-Habib.

Toronto-based musician and author Jordaan Mason is simultaneously invisible and all-too-visible. Jordaan uses they / them / their pronouns and self-describes as a "human mess," which works out to something like genderqueer or non-binary. In essence, their gender identity is something outside of the male-female gender binary, especially in the sense that it sounds prone to change and confusion (hence the "human mess").

In our society, an identity like "human mess" is not often given space or read properly; in general, when people see a beard they presume 'man' and when they see breasts or a dress they presume 'woman' (Jordaan both has a beard and sometimes wears dresses). It is a sweeping assumption, one even woven into the fabric of our language. For example, the use of 'they' as a singular pronoun is still considered grammatically incorrect by a sizeable chunk (and possible majority) of academic institutions; it was not until this year that I had a professor begin a course by sending around a survey asking that we identify which pronouns we use. As such, Jordaan is in several ways invisible: in many, if not most, situations they are coded as 'male' by those who do not know them, an act of misrecognition and misrepresentation that degrades them by suggesting that they are unworthy of proper recognition and respect — it is quite a common trope that if you want to demean someone, call them by the wrong name.

Jordaan is, however, at the same time actually quite visible. Having released six albums, a covers record, various EPs, a novel (2013's *The Skin Team*) — all of which are "basically a memoir of some kind; an autobiography" — and toured both North America and Europe, they are a well-respected and recognized musician, actively successful when you consider that they are unaffiliated with a label and rarely self-promote. Jordaan has built a name on voicing and recording their personal narrative, albeit in a rather indirect, complex fashion — think Neutral Milk Hotel or Joanna Newsom. That visibility seems to have been both a blessing, as Jordaan's influence has helped others in similar situations develop and add their own voices to a series of growing LGBTQ+ movements, and also a curse that has put a target on their back; an unwelcome burden for someone who is still unraveling it all themselves.

THE ISSUE(S) OF VISIBILITY

When I met Jordaan, they were working on balancing things out: "I feel like it's important to talk about my experiences," they explained. "[Genderqueer is] a very invisible thing, unless you're in a queer safe space or something where everyone can ask you what your pronouns are… fans misgender me constantly." Still, they were nervous about the idea of representational politics, at one point stressing, "I can't speak for everybody. I don't want to try to speak for everybody," and again later, "I don't know if I'm role model material, just in the sense that I'm still figuring a lot of stuff out for myself." However, when pressed, they conceded that, "You can't pretend people aren't paying attention to you."

It a statement born of both positive and negative experiences. On one hand, their music (and the identity issues and confusion it explores) is prone to backlash: "When the record [2015's fantastic *The Decline of Stupid Fucking Western Civilization*] came out, I started getting a lot of hate mail. It was like, 'Now you've been open about all these things that are going on in your life in a very specific way, I'm going to use and say those things against you in a way that's harmful.'" It was an eye-opening experience and one that, thankfully, they now feel more capable of addressing both objectively and constructively.

Despite the danger presented by the trolls, the philosophy of sharing experiences still feels vital, although open to fine-tuning: "The thing that I think has been the coolest is that people then shared their work with me that expresses their experience, and they tell me, 'I wouldn't have been able to have done this without seeing someone else do it first.'"

THE COMPLEXITY OF SAFE SPACES

Those queer safe spaces that Jordaan mentioned — one of the few places where they can expect their identity to be properly recognized — are a controversial topic both within and outside of the queer community. As Jordaan explains, "I think about things that are upsetting to some people. Some people consider what I do to be a trigger and therefore it doesn't make sense to do in a safe space. But again there are people who use this term safe space for different types of spaces so there are also safe spaces where me saying those things is totally the purpose of that space."

Safe spaces vary in intention: there are spaces meant to promote mental health and offer support for people struggling with PTSD or similar conditions; spaces meant to promote education, where question, conversation, and debate are encouraged; spaces where people are expected to be aware of the consequences of their actions, their responsibilities, and to *not assume* things like pronouns; and spaces that operate as intersections between the other categories, with modifications made by the individuals involved. Obviously it is complex, and Jordaan was quick to admit to uncertainty: "I still have murky feelings about it because I don't want to apologize for what I'm doing. So that's why it's nice that the people who are now coming to shows already know what I'm doing [thus allowing the musician a supportive environment in which to tackle complex and emotional issues without taking anyone by surprise]."

There are, however, endless complications, and things never work out perfectly. As Jordaan told me, "My experience with spaces that call themselves safe, including spaces that I have myself designated as safe, is no matter what you do you can't control everyone in the space. So almost every safe space environment I've been in has had things that have made people uncomfortable."

EDUCATION

Hopefully, the discussion around safe spaces is just part of the path towards a more accepting society, a journey that requires a lot of patience on Jordaan's part: "[Being mis-gendered is] very frustrating. There are some situations where it really fucks with my head." However, for the time being, they are focused on staying patient and educating where they can. "I don't want to immediately vilify someone just because they didn't use the right pronoun," was a sentiment that came up again and again, the reason being that people need time to learn. "For example, coming out to my mother was like, 'So mom, I'm this thing; I'm genderqueer.' 'What is that?' 'You know, well it's this.' 'Well, what does that mean?' 'What is cisgender, what is…' And it can be a little demoralizing and strange trying to explain that to somebody, but at the same time people need to hear these stories."

It is a philosophy that applies to all manner of experiences, and one that sounds like a driving force behind how Jordaan chooses to face the world. As they concluded, "I think it is just good when you share your stories with people."

Should we welcome our new sonic overlords?

— William Goldie —

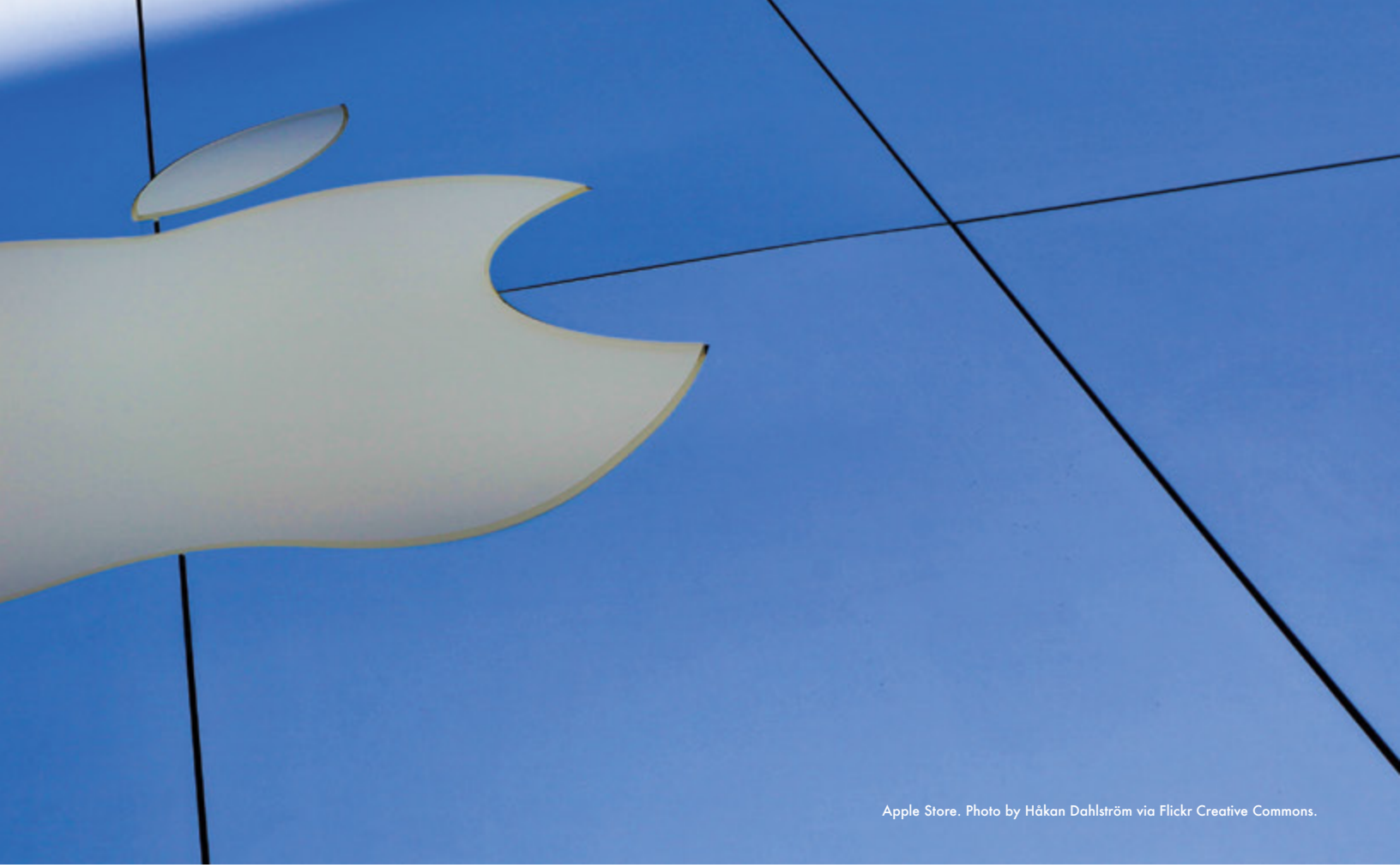
It has been half a year since Apple launched their highly anticipated eponymous streaming service, and unlike many of the company's previous attempts to expand iTunes — anyone else remember Ping? No? — Apple Music seems here to stay, with over eleven million paying customers. This puts its share of the streaming market firmly in second place behind Spotify's approximately thirty million users, and well above other big names like Deezer (3.8m), Rhapsody (3.5m), and the infamous, Jay Z-backed Tidal (over 1.0m). [The statistics here are somewhat ambiguous, as the companies involved, particularly Spotify, rarely disclose exact numbers or the ratio of paid subscribers to trial accounts.]

However, it's a mistake to look at Apple Music as just another streaming service. It has a broader set of goals, and is in a sense competing not only with streaming platforms, but also traditional radio, music stores (physical and digital), and just about every other form of music media outlet. It's unclear if Spotify can even hope to compete, long-term, when Apple has a "home-field advantage" on their devices. Apple has the unique ability among music streaming platforms to make changes to full operating systems, iOS and OSX, in order to render their service more integrated and appealing than its competitors. To some degree, this has already happened — Apple Music has a specially tailored user interface, unavailable to other app developers, that extends beyond the app on iOS devices like the iPhone.

Even when Apple Music is on a level playing field with other streaming services — as it's available on Windows and Android devices — Apple holds considerable influence over the music industry, and can leverage this power for exclusive releases and promotions; Spotify may have three times the number of users that Apple Music has, but the iTunes Store is easily the world's largest music retailer. That sales volume carries a lot of weight in conversation with record labels.

Apple has already exploited this influence to secure exclusive content from many artists, who have released singles, music videos, and, in some cases, even entire albums on the service well before physical release or distribution to other streaming platforms. The Connect feature, a quasi-social network that provides a platform for artists to distribute unstructured content (beyond the EP or LP format) to fans, has served as the pipeline for much of this exclusive content. Connect seems poised to absorb a lot of artists' "secondary content" like remixes, mixtapes, and music videos that have found homes on platforms like SoundCloud, DatPiff, and YouTube in recent years.

The internet radio station Beats 1, which is integrated into the Music app, relies on a similar flexing of Apple's industry muscles. The name's echoing of BBC's station nomenclature is deliberate: the service has attracted a list of celebrity DJs — including Ezra Koenig, Jaden Smith, Annie



Apple Store. Photo by Håkan Dahlström via Flickr Creative Commons.

Clark, Pharrell Williams, Q-Tip, Elton John, various members of Drake's OVO Sound label, and longtime Radio 1 lynchpin Zane Lowe — in order to extend BBC's combination of big name hosts (like Annie Mac) and artist-driven time slots (like the "Essential Mix") to its logical conclusion. A star-studded cast, to say the least, and one that would never exist at a traditional radio station in 2016.

At the centre of it all, presumably, are the former Interscope / Aftermath / Beats executives Andre Young (AKA Dr. Dre) and Jimmy Iovine. If Apple Music is successful at replacing other methods of music distribution, Dre, Iovine, and other Apple execs stand to gain massive power as tastemakers and curators. Dre has already indicated his plans to try to control trends in hip-hop: a verse on "Satisfaction," from his latest album — released exclusively on Apple Music, of course — has Snoop Dogg implying that Dre will pick and choose the artists he wants to succeed with his Beats 1 show "The Pharmacy." The amount of influence he and other Apple Music personalities actually have remains to be seen, but the possibility nonetheless exists that they may acquire a significant degree of control over popular music.

Is Apple any worse a gatekeeper for music than traditional record labels? They certainly have more of an ulterior motive. There are countless stories of record labels abusing their artists, holding up album releases for financial reasons, forcing single releases, and so on — but at the end of they day, labels are just trying to sell music. Apple has a much larger corporate surface area and many more reasons to block or bury a release. It is hard to imagine, for instance, a protest song about mistreated Foxconn factory workers ever playing on Beats 1.

That is an extreme and perhaps unlikely conflict of interest, but Apple's history of censorship on the App Store is long and well-documented. And in a particularly absurd turn of events, Beats 1 is broadcast with censored lyrics, destroying one of its greatest advantages over traditional radio (which is regulated by government agencies that ban profanity in most countries).

To be clear, the evidence so far casts a pretty good light on Apple. Sure, when I glance at my personal recommendations tab in the app, I'm presented with playlists full of Radiohead, Blur, and other iPod ad soundalikes, but I've also seen DJ Shadow, Husker Dü, and more than a few obscure shoegaze groups waiting to be discovered. And these are human-picked playlists from sources as disparate as *Rolling Stone*, *Pitchfork*, and *Resident Advisor*, not Pandora-style algorithmically generated feeds. As someone who grew up with a weak set of suburban radio stations, it was a pretty strange experience to hear a new song for the first time while listening to Beats 1… and then have that same experience six more times over the course of the next hour.

Apple's curators appear to be taking steps against the heavily commercial pop music monoculture that has been the norm for so many years by promoting artists and genres that do not pursue universal, or even broad, appeal; but this could change at any moment. Market research and investor pressure could lead to a Beats 1 that feels more inspired by Madison Avenue than genuine culture, and slates of promoted music that only serve to mirror the *Billboard* charts.

There's no way to tell if the current depth and breadth of curation will continue over the next few years of Apple Music's lifetime or not. All we can do is wait. And watch. And listen.

STRANGERS IN A FOREIGN LAND

YASMINE EL SANYOURA

PSY. Media photo.

The diversity of music around the world demonstrates the wide range of emotions that art can express. However, what happens when music in one language reaches an audience that does not understand it? In the Western world, English dominates the mainstream — which is not to say that there have not been *any* non-English hit singles. In 2012, for example, we saw South Korean rapper / singer PSY's "Gangnam Style" become the first song to hit a billion views on YouTube. Other non-English songs that have climbed the charts include Kyu Sakamoto's "Sukiyaki" (1963), Enigma's "Sadeness (Part 1)" (1990), Nena's "99 Luftballons" (1983), and Ritchie Valens cover of "La Bamba" (1958).

However, while few non-English songs get a share of the spotlight, many others still find success with English-speaking audiences, albeit not as Billboard "hits." The way in which these audiences interpret the foreign music and respond to it allows them the privilege of new experiences, but it comes at the expense of the artists' intentions.

Over the past few years, an increasing number of foreign artists singing in their native languages have found unexpected success with an audience stuck firmly behind the language barrier. On one hand, this has resulted in increasingly diverse touring experiences, with artists performing all over North America and Europe. When asked about this diversity, Hamed Sinno, lead singer of Lebanon's Mashrou' Leila, reflected on how their first concert in Paris several years ago had had an audience that was 70 to 80 percent Arab. These days, he noted, that number (again at a Paris show) had dwindled to about 20 to 25 percent. In a similar vein, Gerald Belanger, founder of event company Kpopcanada, said that crowds at K-pop concerts they organize are not typically Korean. Krowdpop's regional manager, Eunice Chang, went even further, stating, "80 percent of K-pop fans in Toronto aren't Asian."

The plethora of international music online and its accessibility to anyone with an internet connection has put these international artists in a unique position. On one hand, there are fans that support artists' music as a whole, with the sound, lyrics, and message all acting together to appeal to the listener. On the other hand, there are fans that have been able to separate the music from the message because they simply do not know how to do otherwise. When they listen to the lyrics, their senses are only responding to the sound.

Many English-speaking listeners love the element of the unknown found in foreign music. Music becomes interactive on a whole new level, creating a dialogue between the listeners' imagination and the sounds of the artists' instruments and voices; since the the words are incomprehensible, the music is free of any imposed or intended meaning. The mystery of the foreign language allows the listener to project their own fantasies on to what they think the song might be saying. For example, Jim Jarmusch uses the enigmatic feeling "characteristic" of foreign music in his Moroccan-set film *Only Lovers Left Alive*. During a scene in which the two main (vampiric) characters reflect on the mystery of life, Yasmine Hamdan performs the song "Hal" in Arabic. The audience sees the song entrance both vampires, creating the impression of a depth of understanding that eludes them in their own lives; instead, the chorus repeats "Ana ma andee hal," or "I don't have a solution." The scene gets by thanks to an emotional aspect of the song that goes beyond the lyrics; however, there is a fine line between the appreciation of the mystery of foreign music and allowing it to become a vehicle for the fetishizing of these foreign artists and, by extension, their cultures. With foreign music, listeners are free to interpret the music as they wish, and this can be both liberating and problematic.

Many foreign artists deal in relatively light-hearted subject matter. K-pop, which has become a worldwide phenomenon (but has yet to complete its Western crossover), produces music that listeners are meant to consume as one part of a larger, playful bundle. The music is combined with corresponding choreography and music videos to contextualize the song for both Korean and non-Korean listeners, ultimately making it easier for non-Koreans to digest the music itself by associating it with fun dance moves. On the other hand, many foreign songs do have deeper meanings. For example, there is a difference between groups and artists that are hugely popular in their own countries by the standards of the local mainstream scene, such as K-pop group Apink, and those that do not conform to the market and instead opt for politically charged music, like Mashrou' Leila.

With much of non-Korean pop, listeners who do not know the band's language do not have as many aesthetic and visual prompts to assist with contextualization. Moreover, the context is often quite difficult to grasp with only a shallow understanding of the surrounding circumstances. For example, Mashrou' Leila's music is situated in the social and political context of the Arab world. Understanding this requires understanding the society in which the music is based, which is not always easy, especially in a post-9/11 West that vilifies Arabs through racial stereotyping. Ignorance of the politically-charged context paired with an inability to understand the message being expressed ultimately presents the risk of reducing the lyrics to just another sound in the ensemble.

It becomes a question of intentionality: which part of the fan-base should the artist cater towards? The part that appreciates the music for its ability to transcend the barriers of language and still evoke feelings, or the part that is able to contextualize the music and directly relate to it? The music allows for both: giving listeners who do not understand the ability to create new meaning, and providing those who do with a concrete connection to their culture.

Foreign music in the Western world thus caters to several audiences and serves several different functions simultaneously. Despite this phenomenon being sometimes problematic (in a way that should continue to be examined), it shows how at its core, music transcends language barriers globally and continues to make an impact on listeners whether or not they understand the lyrics. Music has the power to make a positive change in individual lives; in the words of Hamed Sinno, "what music can do is allow people to construct a sense of self that's less alienated from what we believe is the status quo."

MEMOIRS OF

Building a Music Scene from the Ground Up

In 2010, I was thirteen, and I moved from a city to a small, growing town — code for monotonous suburbs surrounded by acres and acres of field. Half of my street was just empty lots earmarked for development. I felt trapped in a brain-melting limbo that only I was aware of, betrayed by my parents' decision to resettle. I was entering my first year of high school, and on the first day I had to figure out how to meet people before twelve o'clock, or else I'd be sitting by myself.

Fast forward to the end of the year, in the summer, when my school held an outdoor carnival for charity and asked local bands to come play under a tent in the parking lot. I had made friends and was beginning to adjust to life in a town where there was nothing to do. There, on the field beside the portables behind my school, I caught my first glimpse of the Georgetown, Ontario scene. It was the first time that I thought that maybe living here for the next four years might not be so bad.

The Georgetown scene follows a very formulaic, almost cliché pattern: bands form, play talent shows and basements, and become, in time, a small-town monument. The two high schools in my town were always excited to host live bands at their student events. Small restaurants would occasionally open up their basements as show spaces, but they quickly realized that the noise didn't even break the cost of cleanup. Once senior year came along, words like "goodbye show" began to pop up on posters that were plastered on lockers and street lights. Some groups moved to Toronto and began again with new lineups and different names. Then, new bands began to form.

After standing around at shows and talking to my friends who were either from the area or had older siblings and cousins in the scene, I could distinguish approximately four waves of Georgetown music. There was a first wave, whose generation reaches so far back that I can't seem to salvage the stories or even the names. I do know that the second wave was upbeat: Georgetown had ska punk fever, played by bands that we Georgetowners seem to consider heroes now, whose music brings a rush of nostalgia — memories of being fifteen and uncomfortable about it. Coming next was my era, featuring bands like Standby, Mill Pond, and Casual Disaster. We were anxious for an entirely new set of reasons, and heavily influenced by the Flatliners and PUP. Though there were notably very few girls on stage, they outnumbered the boys in the pit. The fourth, current wave is small, at least at the moment, but there is at least one band keeping it alive. Some see it as a withering and forgotten houseplant; others a budding seed.

By the time I had arrived, the second wave of Georgetown bands was beginning to wrap up. As university and college acceptances came in, guitars were unplugged and put into cases. Garages and basements no longer shook with the sound of band practice. However, in their wake, a whole

"Clouds" by veggiefrog via Flickr Creative Commons. Taken in Georgetown, Ontario.

A SCENE KID

Dora Boras

new generation, inspired and anxious, was beginning to put heads together. This would be my realm for the next two years.

The small-town scene provided so much for those involved. It was a chance for bands to practice playing in front of people, in the comfort and company of their friends and their basements. Budding artists began drawing EP covers that would later line art school application portfolios. Even I, as a photographer, was given a chance to practice my show photography. A network was established: a community where amps were shared, stories were lived, and, for a moment, everyone was close, because we saw each other every day at school. People were jamming, writing, and recording while simultaneously working, applying, and planning. We were so conscious of a life outside of Georgetown — our fingertips just grazing it — that we forgot to look through photo albums or even scroll through iPhone camera rolls and realize that we ourselves had built something special by supporting each other. There was no glamour, nor even much of a reward — we just did it because we loved it and because it mattered.

Before writing this article, I began reconnecting with acquaintances and old band members, looking to re-remember stories and figure out what made our scene so different than others. I would say, "It's hard to write about," and they would go, "No shit, there's no scene here," and I would catch myself saying, "There used to be." Was I the only one that remembered how much fun it had been in high school, standing around in basements, giving salty critiques of a band's sound, like we had any credibility ourselves?

Over the years, I've collected piles of SD cards filled with show photography from local shows — some of them so bad and blurry, I'm embarrassed to even keep them. But they've become a symbol: of capturing my need to be a part of something I thought was so cool; of capturing many friends' first artistic endeavours; of immortalizing raw adolescence. We were nothing like the surrounding scenes in Toronto and Guelph — or the fetishized pop-punk / hardcore scene in Philadelphia — and we never wanted to be. Around Georgetown, we can be so hard on ourselves and our scene (or lack thereof) that we forget to enjoy what we made — from 2014 to 2015, that included creating three music festivals out of nothing. We made our own sound, even if it was the slightly generic product of gear-sharing. Small towns need to cherish their scenes before they evaporate and sell out to big cities or succumb to scene micro-politics. It's easy to find yourself lamenting how the glory days will never be seen again. But then the cycle continues, and we become the people in band hoodies and carabiner-keychains, standing at the back of the show because we're someone's older sibling and we wanted to see how things have changed.

Dieufaite. Photo by Rachel Evangeline Chiong.

BUSKERS OF THE TTC

RACHEL EVANGELINE CHIONG

Lili. Photo by Rachel Evangeline Chiong.

They are the distant echoes teasing the edges of your ears, instantly spiking your senses as you turn the corner and try to sate that universal excitement of not knowing what to expect. Buskers are the gems of the city, unique to their own neighbourhoods; they offer a service entirely different from any other. But depending on the person you are, you've either stopped to listen to the rest of their song while fumbling around awkwardly for change, or you've tried to pass them with as little eye contact as possible. These interactions with the city's jewels are usually the limit to our knowledge of what it's like to be a busker.

This is why I interviewed three of them. Rene is a flautist who underwent a motherhood hiatus from music, but since her daughter grew up, she's been riding the jazz train through Humber College, has performed for people in shelters, and has taught professionally. Known fondly as "the piano man" among commuters, Dieufaite was raised in an orphanage after his parents passed away at age four. He flew to Canada to leave behind the tragedies in Haiti and continue kindling his love with the music that he had discovered during his childhood at the orphanage. Finally, Lili, a student at the University of Toronto, confessed jokingly that she lives a double life, rigorously study piano in school but switching her grand for an accordion when she busks. Besides being buskers in Toronto, they all have the privilege to perform in the TTC.

Most people aren't aware that there's a distinction between TTC buskers and street buskers. Through a project initiated by the Ontario government in 1979, buskers undergo a rigorous process every three years to obtain one of 83 available slots. Dieufaite explained that you would be judged by a panel of professionals to assess musical, performance, and business experience. Rene admitted that she got lucky this time around; she had happened to glance at a newspaper advertisement for the auditions the very day that they were taking place. It had been nerve-racking, she said, to be one among two hundred applicants required to impress an outdoor audience in the seven minutes provided.

Spending time against a wall facing the ever-changing audience of Toronto can begin to expose the interesting sides of the community. Lili revealed the quirkier experiences: there were extra energetic people who took the opportunity to feature themselves in her sets by impromptu and unconsented accompaniments, including singing and dancing. Afterwards, they would assure Lili that they had simply done her a favour and didn't need to be paid, although Lili recalled receiving significantly less money during the time they performed with her. On other days, she received too much: once, a man carrying groceries had stopped to listen to her and expressed his appreciation by giving Lili a fruit after every song. Eventually she had an ample collection of fresh produce at her feet.

Dieufaite highlights the more sobering experiences while busking in a city that was bound to have a darker side among the mix of people streaming back and forth on the subway system. Unfortunately, many still view buskers as homeless layabouts and treat them as such. There had been times, Dieufaite said, when people suffering from addiction or mental health issues had attacked him, which explained why security usually lingered nearby.

Rene, however, had a story to share: a while back, there had been a lady who stayed for her entire set, staring trancelike as she listened. Eventually, when the set ended, the lady gave Rene a bottle of water and moved on. Years later, the woman contacted Rene explaining that she had saved her life — that day years back, she had made up her mind to commit suicide after losing both her house and her husband in the span of a few days. Rene's performance had given her the hope she drastically needed, and soon after, she decided to follow her dreams and open a dance studio. Recounting the story brought a shaky laugh from Rene, as she confessed that she couldn't tell the story without getting teary-eyed — if this was what busking could do, then it was very much worth it.

Busking seemed to reap rewards like no other branch in the music industry. There was something about people's faces, Lili explained, something about how they emerged from the subway stairs and their smiles lit up as they heard the music. When people had begun apologizing profusely for having no change to show their appreciation, Lili put up a sign in good humour which read, "Now accepting compliments." Despite the energy it took to continuously entertain people, Dieufaite said that it was clear that his music had impacted people somehow, and knowing that strangers enjoyed the sound of it made him feel good. Among the gig opportunities and surprising amount of income from the constant crowds of people, Rene said that busking was always a fulfilling experience, from self-improvement to the brightening of another person's day.

When asked if busking would still be part of their lives years into the future, all three said yes. Perhaps it would not be as central as currently, but it always would have its own corner in their lives, much like they do in their city. Whether you're skipping stairs to catch your bus at Islington or wheeling around crowds at Bloor-Yonge, keep your ears peeled for a busker and take a moment to appreciate their craft and their lives — you may even run into Lili, Rene, or Dieufaite.

[TA-KU]
WITHOUT ARTISTIC BORDERS

CLAIRE COWAN

As an artist, moving among different art forms is generally treated with some suspicion — think "jack of all trades, master of none" — but it can also prove to be very effective. For a new generation of multidimensional artists, being confined to a single artistic outlet can be restricting, suffocating a complex worldview or message of change that requires more than one medium to be effectively communicated. This type of artist — embodied by greats such as Kanye West, who uses music and fashion in order to inspire mass movements within the both the art and "real" world — pushes boundaries to convey a message in a variety of ways, allowing them to reach those they might not have touched otherwise. Gone are the days where only one artistic medium was accepted by an audience, and people are being given the opportunity to explore different areas of their artistic ability.

One example of an up-and-coming multidimensional artist is Australian Regan Matthews, who operates under the stage name Ta-ku. Matthews excels at creating art without boundaries, as he works in as many as four art forms, at least two of which are proving to be tremendously successful. For many, Ta-ku is known primarily as a musician, but despite the popularity of his songs, music does not seem to hold artistic priority over the other mediums in which he chooses to express himself.

Ta-ku makes music, and it is great. Known for his down-tempo electronic / keyboard style, he has made a name for himself thanks to his astounding work ethic and his drive to stay creatively active under strict production schedules — he once, for example, released fifty songs in fifty days as an exercise. His production is clean and smooth, as is evident on EPs like *Songs To Break Up To* and *Songs To Make Up To* — churning out dreamy yet somber beats to layer under a variety of featured vocalists. Ta-ku's sound has an astonishing amount of clarity, suggesting both a near-obsessive amount of work and a rare talent. The tracks blend electronically-processed sounds and organic instrumentation into an elegant mix; Ta-ku exists for the listener who prefers more melodic forms of electronic music as opposed to heavier club tracks.

Beyond Ta-ku, Matthews has a lot on the go. For example, he takes an unfathomable amount of photos. While dealing with severe writer's block after the release of *Songs To Break Up To*, Matthews felt that continuing to focus on, and struggle with,

Ta-ku. Media photo via Windish Agency.

music would not have been productive or healthy. Instead, he made the jump to another artistic outlet, purchasing a camera and refocusing his formidable work ethic on excelling as a photographer. Beautiful and aesthetically-driven (in the contemporary sense), his Instagram account bears witness to portraits, cities, building, concerts, and unique moments in time, all underlining his attentive eye for detail. Ta-ku leans towards a clean, minimalist style. Simple lines, neutral colours, and calming approaches to his subject matter create a visual equivalent of his music — another example of the interplay, and hence furthered appreciation, of the artist's creative perspective between mediums. Photography feels very much equal to the work he has done musically, and it seems to have been helpful in getting him into other art forms, such as video and clothing, with which he has also worked (although to a lesser extent).

Ta-ku uses artist collectives to unite any platform of art he excels under, whether it be music, photography, or something else. He has been floating the idea of starting a music label / platform upon which up-and-coming producers could release their music for years, and is the founder of *Team Cozy*, a photography collective where he features artists, allowing their work to speak for itself. He has also combined his ability to create both visually and sonically in the *Create & Explore* project, which pairs producers with photographers — the producer writes a track and then passes it along to the photographer, who puts together a collection of images inspired by their interpretation of the music. This uniting of separate sensory experiences, which results in the creation of both original music and photographs, is an ability unique to the multidimensional artist, who does not see different mediums merely as parallels, but also as lines that intersect and can, through context, transform each other.

Ta-ku seems to take pride in the fact that many of his artistic ideas have become businesses, but, even more importantly, that they act as a way to share his emotional experiences with listeners; he shifts between mediums when one or another is not serving his current mindset. Artists without boundaries push the notion that it is not possible to actively and simultaneously pursue multiple projects by allowing their emotions and ideas to flow freely into any medium they see fit. Having the ability to excel under multiple platforms is not taken for granted by Matthews as he works, collaborates, and creates in the hopes of inspiring anyone and everyone who gives his art a closer look. He discusses his artistic focus and his motives in interviews and TED Talks, and keeps lines of communication with his fans extremely open and honest, as he wants onlookers to watch his journey without misconceptions as to how he is able to do what he does. He emphasizes collaboration, as working with others who share similar goals holds a great importance to him; being surrounded by a community of inspired and artistic beings is a recipe for inspiration without artistic borders. In doing so, he has proven himself to be one of the most exciting and successful multimedia artists operating, disproving those who thought that balancing art forms could never succeed.

Turn the Page

When Music Insiders Look to the Past

Helena Najm

It used to be nothing more than a trope: musician has steady rise to fame, enjoys fruitful (usually short) career, fades into obscurity, attempts comeback with mediocre memoir. However, 2014-2015 offered readers the opportunity to ask themselves: when did music industry nonfiction become so good?

Not since Anthony Kiedis' *Scar Tissue* have music memoirs been so easy to devour. But what goes into writing a good memoir? Perhaps it is timing; giving oneself the distance from one's career needed to properly reflect on it, as Viv Albertine did in *Clothes, Music, Boys*. Or maybe a memoir can help its writer find solid ground while dealing with troubling personal matters, much like how Kim Gordon wrote *Girl in a Band* during a divorce from her husband and bandmate of roughly 30 years, Thurston Moore. Inspiration can also come from a place of necessity: when Jessica Hopper saw a criminal shortage of female music journalism, she decided to make an early-career retrospective to fill the gap.

To those with a barren reading list, prepare to pick up your pens because these titles are sure to keep you busy no matter the motivation behind them.

Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys, Boys **(Viv Albertine)**
Named after the only three things that she seemed to care about during her adolescence, Viv Albertine's book recounts her entire life thus far: from her early childhood in a working class home where nothing was secure to her return to live music performance where, again, she had no safety net and was as raw and unfiltered as she had been in 1976. The Slits' strength and confidence at a time when women were not visible in punk music made them challenging figures that often elicited violence and hate — resulting in their lead singer being stabbed twice within a year. This makes it so much more important for them not to be erased from punk's origin story — after all, it was Albertine who was in a band with Sid Vicious just before he joined the Sex Pistols, and it was Albertine who was friends with Johnny Rotten and toured with the Clash (she had also been friends with Joe Strummer). Her involvement in the movement has been grossly understated for too long. Albertine's retelling of the birth of punk is entertaining enough, but she also offers an intimate look into a tragically overlooked narrative: that of a middle-aged woman, simultaneously navigating motherhood and a return to her passions. Albertine manages to recount the more difficult chapters of her life while maintaining her extremely personable voice and sense of humour with such finesse that there is no need for the reader to be familiar with the Slits to enjoy the story.

Girl in a Band **(Kim Gordon)**
Gordon and Sonic Youth can be somewhat polarizing, but this memoir has received widespread acclaim — and for good reason. An art school graduate (and short-term York University student), Gordon writes with a cool intellectualism that at times translates to a pretentious undertone, but if you're a Sonic Youth fan, you're probably used to that image of her having always been a part of her persona and lyrics. Ever the "cool girl," Gordon's description of her 1980s New York lifestyle is the epitome of hipster nostalgia in the best way. While the momentum of the book is not as consistent as it could have been, the depiction of her Los Angeles childhood and Sonic Youth's early recording sessions — the real highlights of the book — make this an essential read.

The First Collection of Criticism by a Living Female Rock Critic **(Jessica Hopper)**
Alright, she's not a musician, she's the first to admit that she isn't the first to compile this type of collection, and her reviews are not exclusive to rock music, but that doesn't stop Hopper's book from being a great addition to this reading list. Article after article, Hopper writes with wit, charm, and a deep appreciation for music that both Demo readers and staff can relate to. This rather unconventional addition to music-related nonfiction will no doubt inspire others to pick up their pens (or, less romantically, type furiously) and commit their own interpretations of music to paper (and screen), and what are music and writing supposed to do if not inspire?

For those with time on their hands, here are more books that we're looking forward to reading…

I'll Never Write My Memoirs (Grace Jones)
Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl (Carrie Brownstein)
M Train (Patti Smith)

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

ANDREA MACANOVIC AND QUEROBIN MENDOZA

STUDENTS

Elizabeth Tse
English Literature & French Literature
3rd year

"Hey Now"
London Grammar

Max Uslamin
Rotman Commerce
2nd year

"Peanut Butter Jelly"
Galantis

Maria Bhersafi
Political Science & Global Health
5th Year

"Motivated"
Kevin Cossom

Mubashir Baweja
Book and Media Studies & Geography
3rd year

"Long Season"
Fishmans

Houman Madani
Industrial Engineering
1st year

"Midnight in Montgomery"
Alan Jackson

FACULTY

Alexei Kotchetov, Ph.D.
Department of Linguistics

"Nirvana (Original Mix)"
Guy J

Sian Patterson, Ph.D.
Department of Biochemstry

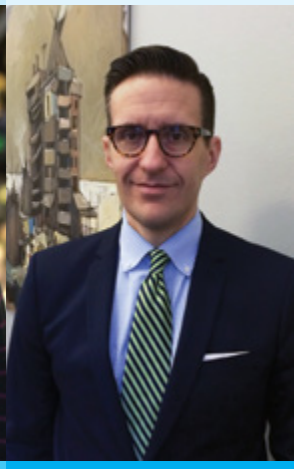
"Renegades"
X Ambassadors

Alex Maris
Department of Women and Gender Studies

"Come Let Go"
Xavier Rudd

Belinda Chang, Ph.D.
Dept. of Cell and Systems Biology
Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

"Badtameez Dil"
Ranbir Kapoor & Deepika Padukone



John Monahan
Warden of Hart House

Black Messiah
D'Angelo and the Vanguard

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